



Prescription drugs misuse is using medicines in a manner or dose which is not prescribed to an individual. When used appropriately, prescription drugs can cure health problems but the misuse deteriorates health (Table 1).



In 2018 and 2019, 6.4 M individuals, 12 years and older, misused the prescription drugs within the past month in US.³



It is a rapidly growing public health problem with a significant economic burden in the US.⁴

Table 1: Prescription drugs: Use and misuse consequences

Drug Category	Use ¹	Misuse consequence ²
Opioids	Pain, Cough, Diarrhea	Drowsiness, nausea, constipation, and, depending on the amount taken, slowed breathing.
Depressants	Anxiety, Panic, Mood Disorders	Slurred speech, shallow breathing, fatigue, disorientation, lack of coordination, and seizures upon withdrawal from chronic use.
Stimulants	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Narcolepsy	Paranoia, dangerously high body temperatures, and an irregular heartbeat.

Among 6-12 graders in Missouri,⁵ the past-month prescription drug misuse is declining since 2016. It is still more than the past month marijuana use (Fig 1). The most commonly misused prescription drug among the same population is pain medication (Fig 2). This finding is consistent with national data.³ The opioid epidemic in the state is affecting individuals of all races, all gender, and many age groups in rural and urban areas.⁶

Fig 1: Trends in past-month drug use among 6-12 graders in Missouri, MSS

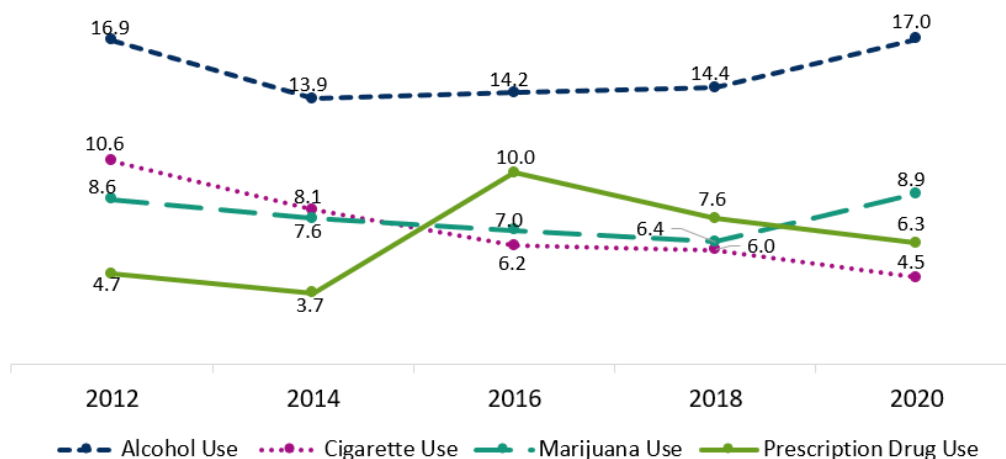
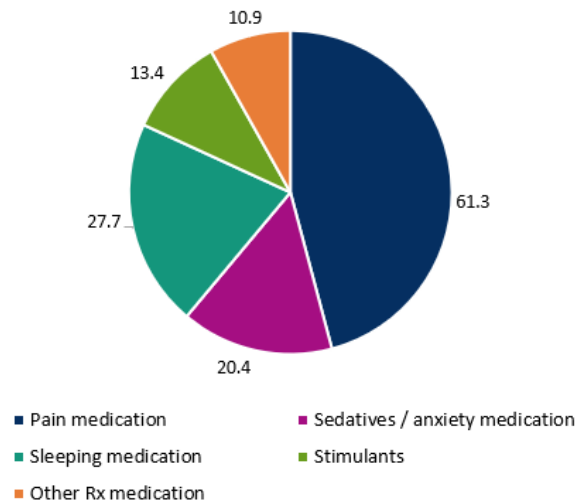


Fig 2: Percentage of past-year prescription drugs misused, MSS 2020



Prescription Drugs Misuse and Covid-19

Covid-19 pandemic had a great impact on emotional and psychological well-being of people. Substance use and misuse increased in the country due to lockdown and unemployment during pandemic.⁷ A Facebook survey was administered by Missouri Institute of Mental health. It assessed the impact of pandemic on substance abuse among Missourians aged 18 years and older.⁸ The findings on prescription drug misuse from this survey is -

Change in misuse

69% reported “slightly more” or “much more” prescription drug misuse during pandemic than usual.

Access

- 73% The medicine was prescribed to them by a medical professional
- 13.5% A family member gave/ sold it
- 13.5% A friend gave/sold it

Stress

Stress was significantly higher among the prescription drug misusers.

References

1. [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
2. [SAMHSA](#)
3. National Survey on Drug Use and Health
4. [Florence et. al.](#)
5. Missouri Student Survey
6. [MO DHSS](#)
7. [CDC](#)
8. Missouri Department of Mental Health